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NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

AND

MISCELLANEOUS JOURNAL.

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- ART. XIII.—1. *Memoirs of the life and writings of Benjamin Franklin, LL. D. F. R. S. &c. written by himself to a late period ; and continued to the time of his death, by his grandson, William Temple Franklin ; now first published from the original MSS.* 4to. Lond. 1818.
2. *The private correspondence of Benjamin Franklin, LL. D. F. R. S. &c. comprising a series of letters, on miscellaneous, literary, and political subjects ; written between the years 1753 and 1790 ; now first published from the originals by his grandson, William Temple Franklin ;* 4to. Lond. 1817.—
Same work, 2d edition, with additions, 2 vols. 8vo. 1817.

WE have read through these volumes, with mixed and somewhat contradictory feelings, respecting the very extraordinary man to whom they relate. The volume first mentioned commences with that portion of Franklin's life, written by himself, which has been long before the public. It is now, for the first time, printed from his original manuscript ; but differs in nothing essential from the copy before in circulation. We have been surprised at the manner in which this piece of biography has been sometimes spoken of. It has been recommended as a work particularly proper to be generally read ; and adapted to promote good morals, especially among the uneducated class of the community, by the beneficial influence of Franklin's example. We think very differ-

ently of it. It is the history of a young man, professedly without any religious, and obviously without much moral principle, making his way in the world, by the force of his talents, sharp-sightedness, industry, resolution, and address, all which properties he possessed in a very uncommon degree. The groundwork of his character, during this period, was bad; and the moral qualities, which contributed to his rise, were of a worldly and very profitable kind. Let us consider some of the facts which he relates of himself. At the age of seventeen, he ran away from home, and left his parents for several months ignorant of his situation, apparently very indifferent to the anxiety which they must have suffered respecting him; though it does not appear that he had any cause of complaint against them. He habitually neglected all the duties of religion; was a professed infidel; and perverted the principles of two of his associates. He gained the affections of a young woman; entered into an engagement of marriage with her; left the country for England; and while there, sent her but one letter, the object of which was to let her know, that he was not likely soon to return. While in England, he wrote and printed a pamphlet, for the purpose of proving, that ‘nothing could possibly be wrong in the world; and that vice and virtue were empty distinctions, no such things existing.’ Here likewise, he attempted to share with Ralph, one of his friends, in the favours of his mistress, which produced a quarrel between Ralph and himself. From England he returned to this country; and two of the last things which he relates of himself, in this portion of his biography, are, that he was engaged in a sort of bargain for a wife, which was broken off, because he insisted upon what were considered too hard terms; and that he had ‘frequent intrigues with low women who fell in his way, which were attended with some expense, and great inconvenience; beside a continual risque to his health, by a distemper which, above all things, he dreaded.’

Subsequently to the period of which we have spoken, there were undoubtedly important changes in the character of Franklin; as will appear by the extracts and remarks, which we shall have occasion to make in the course of our review. He returned from England in the summer of 1726, when he was in the 21st year of his age. The journal which he kept on the voyage is now for the first time published, and is rather curious; as exhibiting some of his powers and intellectual habits in their development, and formation; and discovering

likewise occasionally an amusing contrast between what his character was at this time, and what it subsequently appeared to be. It is full of those details and remarks which indicate an observing, active, and clear-sighted mind. It is very remarkable, also, as a piece of composition, considering the age, and previous advantages of the author; and shows that the style of Franklin was formed at this early period.

Resolution, perseverance, and physical hardihood were characteristics of Franklin. There is an adventure mentioned in his journal, by which this remark is exemplified; and by which we think our readers will be amused; especially if they bear in mind, that the young man who relates it of himself, was afterward familiar in the courts of princes, and honoured by the learned throughout Europe.

The wind being contrary, the vessel in which he was, cast anchor in the harbour of Yarmouth, where he and some others went on shore.

‘ Having taken a view of the church, town, and fort, (on which there is [are] seven large guns mounted,) three of us took a walk up further into the island, and having gone about two miles, we headed a creek that runs up one end of the town, and then went to Freshwater church, about a mile nearer the town, but on the other side of the creek. Having stayed here some time, it grew dark, and my companions were desirous to be gone, lest those whom we had left drinking where we dined in the town, should go on board and leave us. We were told that it was our best way to go straight down to the mouth of the creek, and that there was a ferry-boy that would carry us over to the town. But when we came to the house the lazy whelp was in bed, and refused to rise and put us over; upon which we went down to the water-side, with a design to take his boat, and go over by ourselves. We found it very difficult to get the boat, it being fastened to a stake and the tide risen near fifty yards beyond it; I stripped all to my shirt to wade up to it; but missing the causeway, which was under water, I got up to my middle in mud. At last I came to the stake; but to my great disappointment found she was locked and chained. I endeavoured to draw the staple with one of the thole-pins, but in vain; I tried to pull up the stake, but to no purpose; so that after an hour’s fatigue and trouble in the wet and mud, I was forced to return without the boat. We had no money in our pockets, and therefore began to conclude to pass the night in some hay-stack, though the wind blew very cold and very hard. In the midst of these troubles one of us recollected that he had a horse-shoe in his pocket which he found in his walk, and asked

me if I could not wrench the staple out with that. I took it, went, tried and succeeded, and brought the boat ashore to them. Now we rejoiced and all got in, and when I had dressed myself we put off. But the worst of all our troubles was to come yet; for, it being high water and the tide over all the banks, though it was moonlight we could not discern the channel of the creek, but rowing heedlessly straight forward, when we were got about half way over, we found ourselves aground on a mud bank, and striving to row her off by putting our oars in the mud, we broke one and there stuck fast, not having four inches water. We were now in the utmost perplexity, not knowing what in the world to do; we could not tell whether the tide was rising or falling; but at length we plainly perceived it was ebb, and we could feel no deeper water within the reach of our oar. It was hard to lie in an open boat all night exposed to the wind and weather; but it was worse to think how foolish we should look in the morning, when the owner of the boat should catch us in that condition, where we must be exposed to the view of all the town. After we had strove and struggled for half an hour and more, we gave all over, and sat down with our hands before us, despairing to get off; for if the tide had left us we had been never the nearer, we must have sat in the boat, as the mud was too deep for us to walk ashore through it, being up to our necks. At last we bethought ourselves of some means of escaping, and two of us stripped and got out, and thereby lightening the boat, we drew her upon our knees near fifty yards into deeper water, and then with much ado, having but one oar, we got safe ashore under the fort; and having dressed ourselves, and tied the man's boat, we went with great joy to the Queen's Head, where we left our companions, whom we found waiting for us, though it was very late. Our boat being gone on board, we were obliged to lie ashore all night; and thus ended our walk.' *Memoirs, Appendix, pp. v. vi.*

Shortly after the vessel put in at Cowes; where

'The wind continuing to blow hard westerly, our mess resolved to go on shore, though all our loose corks [qu. *loose corns*? which is still used in this part of the country as a cant phrase for *loose cash*,] were gone already. We took with us some goods to dispose of, and walked to Newport to make our market, where we sold for three shillings in the pound less than prime cost in London; and having dined at Newport, we returned in the evening to Cowes, and concluded to lodge on shore.' *Memoirs, Appendix, p. vii.*

This enormous extravagance accords very ill with our notions of the author of Poor Richard's sayings.

After this we find in the journal a page or two of remarks upon vegetable crabs, which Franklin was *fully convinced* grew upon gulf weed. His observations upon them were continued for several days. The reader who is disposed to think slightly of these first essays of his in physical science, may turn to those of the Royal Society, the account of which is preserved in Birch's History of that learned body.

At page 63 of the Memoirs, commences a portion of Franklin's biography, written by himself, which has not before been published. It continues the account of his life after his return to America.

'I had been,' he says, 'religiously educated as a Presbyterian; but though some of the dogmas of that persuasion, such as *the eternal decrees of God, election, reprobation, &c.* appeared to me unintelligible, others doubtful; and I early absented myself from the public assemblies of the sect, Sunday being my studying day; I never was without some religious principles; I never doubted, for instance, the existence of a Deity, that he made the world and governed it by his providence; that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man; that our souls are immortal; and that all crimes will be punished, and virtue rewarded, either here or hereafter.' *Memoirs*, p. 66.

This last statement is not consistent with the account which he had before given of the pamphlet published by him in London; in which he endeavoured to prove that vice and virtue were empty distinctions, no such things existing. We suspect that those who write their own lives, often confound their present opinions and feelings with their past; and represent their former characters as much more in keeping with their present, than they would appear to be, if fairly displayed. Still the history of a man by himself commonly gives us no inconsiderable knowledge of what he really was. This knowledge, to be sure, is often derived less from his statements, than from our own inferences; and the latter may be in direct opposition to the former. Thus Rousseau, in his Confessions, represents himself as one of the most virtuous and disinterested of human beings; while his reader perceives that he was diseased in every part, and in a continual fever, with a morbid excess of selfishness.—When he was about 27 years old, Franklin says, that he

'Conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at *moral perfection*; I wished to live without committing any fault at any time.' *Memoirs*, p. 67.

He accordingly formed a schedule of the moral virtues ; made a table for the days of the week, against which he arranged his list ; and determined after daily examination to note his offences in this table. This practice he continued for several years ; but complains that he never could acquire habits of order. As to the other virtues, he leaves us to infer that he succeeded pretty well. His list of the virtues with his remarks, we confess, does not give us the impression, that his notions of duty were very high or very comprehensive ; and the language in some parts is rather coarse and rancid. It is as follows ;

‘ 1. *Temperance*.—Eat not to dullness ; drink not to elevation.

‘ 2. *Silence*.—Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself ; avoid trifling conversation.

‘ 3. *Order*.—Let all your things have their places ; let each part of your business have its time.

‘ 4. *Resolution*.—Resolve to perform what you ought ; perform without fail what you resolve.

‘ 5. *Frugality*.—Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself ; i. e. Waste nothing.

‘ 6. *Industry*.—Lose no time ; be always employed in something useful ; cut off all unnecessary actions.

‘ 7. *Sincerity*.—Use no hurtful deceit ; think innocently and justly ; and if you speak, speak accordingly.

‘ 8. *Justice*.—Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

‘ 9. *Moderation*.—Avoid extremes ; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

‘ 10. *Cleanliness*.—Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.

‘ 11. *Tranquillity*.—Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

‘ 12. *Chastity*.—Rarely use venery, but for health or offspring ; never to dullness or weakness, or the injury of your own or another’s peace or reputation.

‘ 13. *Humility*.—Imitate *Jesus* and *Socrates*.’ *Memoirs*, p. 68.

Of his religion, at this period, some judgment may be formed from the following extract.

‘ Conceiving God to be the fountain of wisdom, I thought it right and necessary to solicit his assistance for obtaining it ; to this end I formed the following little prayer, which was prefixed to my tables of examination, for daily use.

“O powerful goodness! bountiful father! merciful guide! Increase in me that wisdom which discovers my truest interest. Strengthen my resolution to perform what that wisdom dictates. Accept my kind offices to thy other children, as the only return in my power for thy continual favors to me.”

‘I used also sometimes a little prayer which I took from Thomson’s Poems, viz.

*“Father of light and life, thou God supreme!
O teach me what is good; teach me thyself!
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,
From every low pursuit; and fill my soul
With knowledge, conscious peace and virtue pure;
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss!”* Mem. pp. 70, 71.

In connexion with this plan for his own improvement, he determined to write a book, entitled the *Art of Virtue*; showing how the different virtues before mentioned may be acquired, and their particular advantages. He formed likewise a great and extensive project for the moral improvement of mankind; which was to

‘Raise a *United Party for Virtue*, by forming the virtuous and good men of all nations into a regular body, to be governed by suitable good and wise rules, which good and wise men may probably be more unanimous in their obedience to, than common people are to common laws.’ Mem. p. 76.

This was to be effected by forming a society, the members of which should profess their belief in certain articles of religion, the same in substance with the fundamental articles of Lord Herbert; and should exercise themselves in the practice of the moral virtues, after the rules which Franklin had laid down for himself. The book however was not written, and the project was communicated to but two individuals. In relation to this project, Franklin makes the following fine remark.

‘I have always thought that one man of tolerable abilities, may work great changes, and accomplish great affairs among mankind, if he first forms a good plan; and cutting off all amusements or other employments that would divert his attention, makes the execution of that same plan, his sole study and business.’ Mem. p. 77.

From about this period till he sailed for England as agent of the colony, in 1757, when he was in his 52d year, Frank-

lin was distinguished for his industry, activity, usefulness, influence, and popularity. He gradually took the lead as a public man in the colony in which he resided, Pennsylvania; and his exertions seem to have been effectually directed to the promotion of important and beneficial purposes. He was a most valuable citizen. Nothing in which his services were required was too great for his talents, and nothing, in which he might contribute to the public good, too apparently trifling for his attention. He laid the foundation of some of those institutions, by which that state is now distinguished. He was actively engaged in different departments relating to the army, about the time of the well known defeat of General Braddock; and at one period took a commission as Colonel of a colonial regiment. He was, during the same portion of his life, distinguishing himself by his discoveries in electricity, and by giving a form to this new science.

We cannot follow him, however, in the detail of his particular services; nor is it necessary; for his character in the respects above mentioned is sufficiently well known. We shall add, therefore, but two extracts from this portion of his biography.

His first promotion was his being chosen in 1736 clerk of the General Assembly. The year following, when he was again proposed, one gentleman, a new member, made a speech against him, in favour of some other candidate. Franklin proceeds.

‘I was however chosen, which was the more agreeable to me, as besides the pay for the immediate service of clerk, the place gave me a better opportunity of keeping up an interest among the members, which secured to me the business of printing the votes, laws, paper-money, and other occasional jobs for the public, that on the whole were very profitable. I therefore did not like the opposition of this new member, who was a gentleman of fortune and education, with talents that were likely to give him in time great influence in the house, which indeed afterwards happened. I did not however aim at gaining his favour by paying any servile respect to him, but after some time took this other method. Having heard that he had in his library a certain very scarce and curious book, I wrote a note to him, expressing my desire of perusing that book, and requesting that he would do me the favor of lending it to me for a few days. He sent it immediately; and I returned it in about a week with another note, expressing strongly my sense of the favor. When we next met in the house, he spoke to me, (which he had never done before,) and with great

civility ; and he ever after manifested a readiness to serve me on all occasions, so that we became great friends, and our friendship continued to his death. This is another instance of the truth of an old maxim I had learned, which says, "*He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another, than he whom you yourself have obliged.*" And it shows how much more profitable it is prudently to remove, than to resent, return, and continue inimical proceedings.' *Mem.* pp. 82, 83.

All this is very well, to be sure, but it is very characteristic. The whole passage shows, that the writer habitually kept a steady eye upon what was *most profitable*.

In the year 1751, Dr. Thomas Bond proposed a plan for erecting a hospital in Philadelphia ; for which purpose a grant was desired from the General Assembly. This was advocated by Franklin, who was a member of that body ; but encountered strong opposition. He alleged that £2000 might be obtained by donations from individuals ; but this was considered a most extravagant supposition, and utterly impossible. He then brought in a bill, by which the colony granted £2000 for this object, on condition that £2000 should be raised by individuals.

‘ This condition carried the bill through ; for the members who had opposed the grant, and now conceived they might have the credit of being charitable without the expense, agreed to its passage ; and then in soliciting subscriptions among the people, we urged the conditional promise of the law as an additional motive to give, since every man’s donation would be doubled ; thus the clause worked both ways. The subscriptions accordingly soon exceeded the requisite sum, and we claimed and received the public gift, which enabled us to carry the design into execution. A convenient and handsome building was soon erected, the institution has by constant experience been found useful, and flourishes to this day ; and I do not remember any of my political manœuvres, the success of which at the time gave me more pleasure ; or wherein, after thinking of it, I more easily excused myself for having made some use of cunning.’ *Memoirs*, p. 99.

We really do not perceive much cunning, nor even any very remarkable ingenuity, in these proceedings. We felt however, after reading the concluding sentence, some curiosity to meet with accounts of those political manœuvres, in which Franklin in his own opinion made a less excusable use of cunning. We do not recollect however that any state-

ments which can be supposed to relate to transactions of this sort, occur in the volumes before us.

Franklin sailed for England merely as agent of the colony of Pennsylvania in its contests with the proprietaries, the representatives and heirs of Penn, its founder. Respecting these transactions there is a great deal of detail without importance or interest. But after the commencement of the serious difficulties between England and America, Franklin had the principal share in managing the American cause in the former country. He was appointed agent for other colonies besides Pennsylvania, and particularly for Massachusetts, his native province; and he rendered services of great value to his country. His reputation, which was at this time very high, as a philosopher, added something of respectability to her cause, or at least did not detract from its importance. His shrewdness, dexterity, and straight-forward good sense, qualities which he had, though they are not always found united, enabled him fully to improve the vantage ground which he possessed in his controversies with the English ministry. Yet there appears to have been, during a part of the period of his agency, too much indecision and wavering in his politics, and too great a readiness to go over to the administration, who were, at different times, evidently desirous of gaining him to their party. It is remarkable that this fact has not been more adverted to since the publication of these volumes, considering the proofs of it which his letters furnish.

January 9, 1768. He writes to his son, Governor Franklin;

‘I am told there is talk of getting me appointed under-secretary to Lord Hillsborough; but with little likelihood, as it is a settled point here that I am too much of an American.’ *Correspondence*, p. 151.

In a long letter to his son, of July 2, 1768, he says that Lord Sandwich, the Post Master General, had intimated an intention of taking from him his office of Post Master in America; and then proceeds,

‘This the Duke [the Duke of Grafton, then first lord of the Treasury] had wished him (Mr. Cooper) to mention to me, and to say to me at the same time that though my going to my post might remove the objection, yet if I chose rather to reside in England, my merit was such in his opinion, as to entitle me to something better here, and it should not be his fault if I was not

well provided for. I told Mr. Cooper that without having heard any exception had been taken to my residence here, I was really preparing to return home, and expected to be gone in a few weeks. That however I was extremely sensible of the Duke's goodness in giving me this intimation and very thankful for his favourable disposition towards me; that having lived long in England, and contracted a friendship and affection for many persons here, it could not but be agreeable to me to remain among them some time longer, if not for the rest of my life; and that there was no nobleman to whom I could from sincere respect for his great abilities, and amiable qualities, so cordially attach myself, or to whom I should so willingly be obliged for the provision he mentioned, as to the Duke of Grafton, if his Grace should think I could, in any station where he might place me, be serviceable to him and to the public. Mr. Cooper said he was very glad to hear I was still willing to remain in England, as it agreed so perfectly with his inclinations to keep me here. Wished me to leave my name at the Duke of Grafton's as soon as possible and to be at the Treasury again the next board day. I accordingly called at the Duke's, and left my card; and when I went next to the Treasury, his Grace not being there, Mr. Cooper carried me to Lord North, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said very obligingly, after talking of some American affairs, I am told by Mr. Cooper that you are not unwilling to stay with us; I hope we shall find some way of making it worth your while. I thanked his lordship, and said I should stay with pleasure, if I could any ways be useful to government.' *Correspondence*, pp. 163, 166.

Any ways useful to government! This readiness of Dr. Franklin to serve under Lord North, was after the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, it was after, upon this very occasion, he had written home to Mr. Charles Thompson; 'the sun of liberty is set; you must light up the candles of industry and economy;' it was after the violent effervescence of indignation, from one end of the continent to the other, which that act produced; it was after the non-importation agreements of 1765; it was after that great man, the first Pitt, had said that Parliament had no right to tax America, and that *he was glad that America had resisted*; it was after the 'Dukes of York and Cumberland, the lords of the bed-chamber, the officers of the household, and most of the bench of bishops' had declared themselves 'for carrying fire and sword into America;' it was after the lightening up of the heavens during the short period of the Rockingham administration, and when the storm had recommenced gloomier and more violent than

ever ; it was the year after Charles Townsend had carried through his bill for raising a revenue in America ; and while it was producing its full effects in this country ; and it was the month after lord Hillsborough had written to General Gage, directing him to send troops to Boston, and stating that this was ‘ a service of a delicate nature, and possibly leading to consequences not easily foreseen.’ It was at this period, that ‘ it could not but be agreeable’ to Franklin to remain in England, under the patronage of the ministry, ‘ for some time longer, if not for the rest of his life.’

After the passage which we have quoted, however, it is but fair to give the following from the same letter ; upon which our readers will lay whatever stress they think proper.

‘ For my own thoughts, I must tell you that though I did not think fit to decline any favour so great a man expressed an inclination to do me, because at court if one shews an unwillingness to be obliged it is often construed as a mark of mental hostility, and one makes an enemy ; yet so great is my inclination to be at home, and at rest, that I shall not be sorry if this business falls through, and I am suffered to retire with my old post ; nor indeed very sorry if they take that from me too on account of my zeal for America, in which some of my friends have hinted to me I have been too open.’

* * * * *

‘ You see by the nature of this whole letter that it is to yourself only. It may serve to prepare your mind for any event that shall happen. If Mr. Grenville comes into power again in any department respecting America, I must refuse to accept of any thing that may seem to put me in his power, because I apprehend a breach between the two countries ; and that refusal will give offence. So that you see a turn of a die may make a great difference in our affairs. We may be either promoted, or discarded ; one or the other seems likely soon to be the case, but ’tis hard to divine which.’ *Correspondence*, pp. 167, 168.

Mr. Grenville had sent orders to the governors of the different colonies to furnish an account of the manufactures in their respective governments. It appeared from the reports so far as received, that there were no manufactures of any consequence. Dr. Franklin, upon this occasion, thus writes to his son, the Governor of New Jersey, who had neglected to send an account, of which Mr. Grenville had complained.

‘ All the reports speak of the dearness of labor which makes manufactures impracticable. Only the Governor of North Car-

olina parades with a large manufacture in his country that may be useful to Britain of *pine boards*; they have fifty saw mills on one river. These accounts are very satisfactory here, and induce the parliament to despise and take no notice of the Boston resolutions. I wish you would send your account before the meeting of next parliament. You have only to report a glass-house for coarse window glass and bottles, and some domestic manufactures of linen and woollen for family use that do not half clothe the inhabitants, all the finer goods coming from England, and the like. I believe you will be puzzled to find any other, though I see great puffs in the papers.' *Correspondence*, p. 158.

The Boston resolutions which Franklin here discovers no unwillingness to have brought into contempt, were, we presume, those passed Oct. 28th, 1767, for promoting industry, economy, and manufactures, in order to prevent the unnecessary importation of European commodities.

In August 1772, Franklin was soliciting a favour of some sort from the British government. In a letter to his son, he mentions the removal of lord Hillsborough from the ministry, and thus proceeds;

'The King's dislike made the others more firmly united in the resolution of disgracing H. by setting at nought his famous report. But now that business is done, perhaps our affair may be less regarded in the Cabinet and suffered to linger, and possibly may yet miscarry. Therefore let us beware of every word and action, that may betray a confidence in its success, lest we render ourselves ridiculous in case of disappointment. We are now pushing for a completion of the business, but the time is unfavourable, every body gone or going into the country, which gives room for accidents.' *Correspondence*, p. 171.

This favour, as may be inferred from a subsequent letter, was a grant of land. Lord Hillborough, he says,

'Of all the men I ever met with is surely the most unequal in his treatment of people, the most insincere and the most wrong headed; witness besides his various behaviour to me, his duplicity in encouraging us to ask for more land, ask for *enough to make a province*, when we at first asked only for 2,500,000 acres, were his words, pretending to befriend our application, then doing every thing to defeat it, and reconciling the first to the last by saying to a friend, that he meant to defeat it from the beginning; and that his putting us upon asking so much was with that very view, supposing it too much to be granted. Thus by the way, his mortification becomes double. He has served us by the very means he

meant to destroy us, and tript up his own heels into the bargain.' *Correspondence*, pp. 196, 197.

There may be, however, some key to the meaning of these two last passages, which is not given in the volumes before us, and with which we are not acquainted. As they now stand, they certainly have all the appearance of relating to a personal favour. Governor Franklin, to whom the letters were written from which we have quoted the preceding extracts, took an opposite side in politics to his father, and was a decided supporter of the royal cause.

It is an offence against good morals to represent a character differently from what it appears upon fair examination; whether this be done by extravagant praise, or unmerited censure. Honourable reputation is the highest reward which society can bestow; but in order that it may preserve its worth, and be regarded as an object of ambition by high minded men, it is necessary that it should be apportioned with some degree of fairness to the true merits of different candidates. There is no question about the criminality of him who endeavours to rob a deserving man of his just share; but on the other hand, we are to recollect, that it is not an innocent thing, to give a very large portion to one who deserves it not; and to hold up a man of very mixed and imperfect virtue, as a model of excellence. He who does this, does what is in his power, to lower the standard of morals, and lessen the value of reputation. It is a fine, natural expression of indignant feeling which Schiller utters, when describing the manner in which the glowing expectations of his youth were chilled by the experience of life, he says,

‘I saw too Glory’s holy flowers
Round common brows profanely twined.’*

The facts which appear in some of the foregoing extracts, if we understand them correctly, (and they seem to us to admit of being understood but in one way,) are certainly inconsistent with severe integrity, and disinterested patriotism. They are not inconsistent, however, with the possession of talents and dispositions, which may enable and incline a man,

* ‘Ich sah des Ruhmes heil’ge Kränze
Auf der gemeinen Stirn entweiht.’ *Schillers Ideale.*

The lines given above are from the manuscript translation of a young friend.

in certain situations, to render very important services to his country. Such talents and dispositions, we conceive that Franklin possessed.

Franklin left England in March 1775. During the six months which preceded his departure, while the aspect of events was becoming daily more alarming, various proposals were agitated for effecting a reconciliation between the two countries. Of the transactions relating to this subject, in all which he was a principal actor, Franklin has given a long account, which is inserted in his memoirs. Few men appear to have had more honest zeal in endeavouring to prevent the consummation which was now rapidly approaching, than Lord Howe, who was afterwards admiral on our coast, and subsequently so distinguished by his victory over the French fleet on the 1st of June, 1794. With him Franklin was for some time engaged in a sort of semi-official negotiation. He had various interviews likewise with the Earl of Chatham; and was consulted by him previously to his bringing forward his celebrated motion and propositions, made in the House of Lords, on the 20th January and 1st February 1775. The account of these interviews has the interest which attaches to every thing relating to that most eminent man, who, though broken with years and infirmities, came forward at this time, after a long absence from his seat in Parliament, to display the strength of his mighty mind in the cause of justice and humanity;—appearing, among those by whom he was surrounded, like an ancient castle with its massy walls, overhanging the ill-assorted buildings of some modern city. We will give one or two extracts.

‘On the 19th of Jan. I received a card from Lord Stanhope, acquainting me, that Lord Chatham having a motion to make on the morrow in the house of lords, concerning America, greatly desired that I might be in the house, into which Lord S. would endeavor to procure me admittance. At this time it was a rule of the house that no person could introduce more than one friend. The next morning, his lordship let me know by another card, that if I attended at two o’clock in the lobby, Lord Chatham would be there about that time, and would himself introduce me. I attended, and met him there accordingly. On my mentioning to him what Lord Stanhope had written to me, he said, “Certainly; and I shall do it with the more pleasure, as I am sure your being present at this day’s debate will be of more service to America than mine;” and so taking me by the arm, was leading me along the passage to the door that enters near the throne, when

one of the door-keepers followed and acquainted him that by the order, none were to be carried in at that door, but the eldest sons or brothers of peers; on which he limped back with me to the door near the bar, where were standing a number of gentlemen waiting for the peers who were to introduce them, and some peers waiting for friends they expected to introduce; among whom he delivered me to the door-keepers, saying aloud, this is Dr. Franklin, whom I would have admitted into the house; when they readily opened the door for me accordingly. As it had not been publicly known that there was any communication between his lordship and me, this I found occasioned some speculation. His appearance in the house, I observed, caused a kind of bustle among the officers, who were hurried in sending messengers for members, I suppose those in connection with the ministry, something of importance being expected when that great man appears; it being but seldom that his infirmities permit his attendance. I had great satisfaction in hearing his motion and the debate upon it, which I shall not attempt to give here an account of, as you may find a better in the papers of the time. It was his motion for withdrawing the troops from Boston, as the first step towards an accommodation. The day following, I received a note from Lord Stanhope expressing, that "at the desire of Lord Chatham was sent me inclosed, the motion he made in the house of Lords, that I might be possessed of it in the most authentic manner, by the communication of the individual paper which was read to the house by the mover himself." I sent copies of this motion to America, and was the more pleased with it, as I conceived it had partly taken its rise from a hint I had given his lordship in a former conversation. It follows in these words.

Lord Chatham's Motion, June 20, 1775.

"That an humble address be presented to his majesty, most humbly to advise and beseech his majesty, that, in order to open the way towards an happy settlement of the dangerous troubles in America, by beginning to allay ferments and soften animosities there; and above all, for preventing in the mean time any sudden and fatal catastrophe at Boston, now suffering under the daily irritation of an army before their eyes, posted in their town, it may graciously please his majesty, that immediate orders may be dispatched to General Gage for removing his majesty's forces from the town of Boston, as soon as the rigor of the season and other circumstances, indispensable to the safety and accommodation of the said troops, may render the same practicable."

"I was quite charmed with Lord Chatham's speech in support of his motion.* He impressed me with the highest idea of him

* It was reported at the time, that his lordship had concluded his

as a great and most able statesman. Lord Camden, another wonderfully good speaker and close reasoner, joined him in the same argument, as did several other lords, who spoke excellently well; but all availed no more than the whistling of the winds. The motion was rejected. Sixteen Scotch peers, and twenty-four bishops, with all the lords in possession or expectation of places, when they vote together unanimously, as they generally do for ministerial measures, make a dead majority that renders all debating ridiculous in itself, since it can answer no end. Full of the high esteem I had imbibed for Lord Chatham, I wrote back to Lord Stanhope the following note, viz.

‘ Dr. Franklin presents his best respects to Lord Stanhope, with many thanks to his lordship and Lord Chatham, for the communication of so authentic a copy of the motion. Dr. F. is filled with admiration of that truly great man. He has seen in the course of life, sometimes eloquence without wisdom, and often wisdom without eloquence; in the present instance he sees both united, and both, as he thinks, in the highest degree possible.’

‘ *Craven Street, Jan. 23, 1775.*’

Memoirs, p 255, 257.

Speaking of an interview he had with Lord Chatham, a little previous to this time, Dr. Franklin says

‘ He received me with an affectionate kind of respect, that from so great a man was extremely engaging; but the opinion he expressed of the congress was still more so. They had acted, he said, with so much temper, moderation, and wisdom, that he thought it the most honorable assembly of statesmen, since those of the ancient Greeks and Romans in the most virtuous times. That there were not in their whole proceedings, above one or two things he could have wished otherwise; perhaps but one, and that was their assertion, that the keeping up a standing army in the colonies in time of peace, without consent of their legislatures, was against law; he doubted that was not well founded, and that the law alluded to did not extend to the colonies. The rest he admired and honoured. He thought the petition decent, manly, and properly expressed.’

* * * * *

‘ He expressed a great regard and warm affection for that country, with hearty wishes for their prosperity; and that gov-

speech with the following remarkable words. “ If the ministers thus persevere in *misadvising* and *misleading* the King, I will not say that they can alienate the affections of his subjects from his crown, but I will affirm, that they will make the crown *not worth his wearing*. I will not say that the King is betrayed, but I will pronounce that *the kingdom is undone*.

ernment here might soon come to see its mistakes, and rectify them; and intimated that possibly he might, if his health permitted, prepare something for its consideration, when the parliament should meet after the holidays; on which he should wish to have previously my sentiments.' *Memoirs*, p. 249.

After his return to America, and subsequently to his having been there engaged in very important political transactions, Dr. Franklin sailed on a mission to France, in October 1776, when he was in the 71st year of his age. During his residence in that country, he received the most flattering attentions from the court, the learned, and generally from all ranks of people. Notwithstanding his advanced age, he performed the laborious and difficult duties of his station, during the continuance of the war, with great industry, ability, and address. Respecting the part which he took in the negotiations for peace, no new information of much importance is given in the volumes before us. It is generally understood, we suppose, that the French court was solicitous, that we should not obtain very favourable terms; but should remain a weak people, under the influence of France, and dependant upon that country. It is well known, likewise, that in asserting the claims of America, Franklin did not give any very hearty support to our other plenipotentiaries, Mr. Adams and Mr. Jay; but on the contrary, that he rather took side with the French minister, the Count de Vergennes, in opposition to them. His attachment to the French court, from whatever causes it originated, appeared at least to have come in competition with that to his own country. There is, as we have said, no explanation or defence of his conduct in the volumes before us. There is not any notice of the facts just stated; though these charges against Franklin have long been before the public. It should be recollected, however, with regard to his conduct, that the other ministers, when they found what the disposition of the French court was, at once took upon themselves the responsibility of disobeying their instructions from Congress, which, as the Count de Vergennes expresses it in one of his notes, 'directed them to do nothing without the participation of the King' [of France.] Franklin, therefore, had these instructions on his side. It is to be recollected also, that he acceded at last to the measures of his colleagues.

After his return to America, he wrote a long letter, December 29, 1788, to Charles Thompson, then Secretary to

Congress, complaining that his services to his country had not been properly requited. ‘I must own,’ he says, ‘I did hope that, as it is customary in Europe to make some liberal provision for ministers, when they return from foreign service, the congress would at least have been kind enough to have shown their approbation of my conduct, by a grant of a small tract of land in their western country, which might have been of use, and some honour to my posterity.’ In this letter, he inclosed a ‘*Sketch of the services of B. Franklin to the United States of America.*’ It is a little remarkable that in this statement, which is somewhat minute, he says nothing of his services as minister in negotiating the peace with England. If either of those venerable men, who acted with him, could now be induced to employ himself in drawing up such a statement, we suppose his services upon this occasion would form not an unimportant article.

But whatever were the errors of Franklin in respect to the negotiations for peace, it should be recorded to his honour, that he made a strenuous effort for introducing into the treaty the following article.

‘If war should arise between the two contracting parties, the merchants of either country then residing in the other, shall be allowed to remain nine months to collect their debts and settle their affairs, and may depart freely, carrying off all their effects without molestation or hindrance. And all women and children, scholars of every faculty, cultivators of the earth, artizans, manufacturers, and fishermen, unarmed, and inhabiting unfortified towns, villages, and places; and in general all others whose occupations are for the common subsistence and benefit of mankind, shall be allowed to continue their respective employments, and shall not be molested in their persons; nor shall their houses or goods be burnt or otherwise destroyed, nor their fields wasted by the armed force of the enemy, into whose power, by the events of the war, they may happen to fall: but if any thing is necessary to be taken from them for the use of such armed force, the same shall be paid for at a reasonable price. And all merchant and trading vessels, employed in exchanging the products of different places, and thereby rendering the necessaries, conveniences, and comforts of human life, more easy to be obtained, and more general, shall be allowed to pass free and unmolested; and neither of the contracting powers shall grant or issue any commission to any private armed vessels, empowering them to take or destroy such trading vessels, or interrupt such commerce.’ *Memors*, p. 371.

This article is nearly the same with that which he afterwards actually introduced into the treaty with Prussia.

The amelioration here proposed in the usages of war is most earnestly to be desired ; and Franklin's efforts to effect it are in a very high degree honourable to his character. As the first step towards its full adoption, it is to be hoped that civilized nations will before long agree to suppress the licensed piracy of privateering. Franklin addressed both Mr. Oswald, and Mr. Hartley, upon the subject of his proposition ; and it is one of such importance that we will quote at some length from his remarks. He writes thus to Mr. Oswald.

‘It is for the interest of humanity in general, that the occasions of war, and the inducements to it should be diminished.

‘If rapine is abolished, one of the encouragements to war is taken away, and peace therefore more likely to continue and be lasting.

‘The practice of robbing merchants on the high seas, a remnant of the ancient piracy though it may be accidentally beneficial to particular persons, is far from being profitable to all engaged in it, or to the nation that authorizes it. In the beginning of a war, some rich ships, not upon their guard, are surprized and taken. This encourages the first adventurers to fit out more armed vessels, and many others to do the same. But the enemy at the same time become more careful, arm their merchant ships better ; and render them not so easy to be taken ; they go also more under protection of convoys : thus while the privateers to take them are multiplied, the vessels subject to be taken and the chances of profit are diminished, so that many cruizes are made wherein the expences overgo the gains ; and as is the case in other lotteries, though particulars have got prizes, the mass of adventurers are losers, the whole expense of fitting out all the privateers during a war, being much greater than the whole amount of goods taken. Then there is the national loss of all the labour of so many men during the time they have been employed in robbing ; who besides spend what they get in riot, drunkenness, and debauchery, lose their habits of industry, are rarely fit for any sober business after a peace, and serve only to increase the number of highwaymen and house-breakers. Even the undertakers who have been fortunate, are by sudden wealth led into expensive living, the habit of which continues when the means of supporting it ceases, and finally ruins them. A just punishment for their having wantonly and unfeelingly ruined many honest, innocent traders and their families, whose subsistence was employed in serving the common interests of mankind.’ *Correspondence*, pp. 420, 421.

In his letter to Mr. Hartley, he says,

‘I should be happy if I could see, before I die, the proposed improvement of the law of nations established. The miseries of mankind would be diminished by it, and the happiness of millions secured and promoted.’ * * * ‘I do not wish to see a new Barbary rising in America, and our long extended coast occupied by piratical states. I fear lest our privateering success in the two last wars should already have given our people too strong a relish for that most mischievous kind of gaming, mixed [with] blood.’ * * * ‘Try, my friend, what you can do, in procuring for your nation the glory of being, though the greatest naval power, the first who voluntarily relinquished the advantage that power seems to give them, of plundering others, and thereby impeding the mutual communications among men of the gifts of God, and rendering miserable multitudes of merchants and their families, artizans, and cultivators of the earth, the most peaceable and innocent part of the human species.’ *Correspondence*, p. 432.

It is when engaged in projects and efforts of this kind, and he was very ready to engage in them, that Franklin’s character appears in its most amiable, and we might almost say, venerable aspect.*

No full and faithful history is any where to be found of the very important and interesting negotiation, by which the war of the revolution was terminated. There is nothing in the records of human events, to which our descendants, if they have the common feelings of men, will look back with more interest, than to the character and conduct of those, by whom our liberties and rights were vindicated ; and to the whole of that conflict of peril and glory, through which we rose to our present rank among nations. But there is yet no history of our revolution ;—no history such as ought to be, and will be written. It is a work which remains for some future native historian, who, let him devote to it whatever length of years he may, or patient industry, or affluence of mind, will be employing himself usefully and honourably. He will not be labouring upon perishable materials, and no expense of genius or art will be wasted. His subject will have all the unity that can be wished for in an historical composition ; but that is a thing hardly to be mentioned in this connexion. It will be distinguished

* In Franklin’s *Miscellaneous Works*, there is a long and very able letter on the *Criminal Laws and the practice of privateering*, addressed to Benjamin Vaughan, Esq.

from every other in the political records of man by its moral interest, and by a termination gratifying to the best feelings of human nature. The philosopher, and the man of strong moral sensibility, may close the volume in which it is recorded, with the words of Milton ;

Oh how comely it is, and how reviving,
When God into the hands of the oppressed,
Puts invincible might.

Among the eminent men of the times of which we speak, there were those who were distinguished not more from common men by their largeness and energy of mind, than from the common herd of statesmen and warriors, by their integrity, disinterested patriotism, and the union of public and private virtues. Those to whom we refer were not great men to be shown off in history merely ; or looked at, at a distance, when dressed up in some formal panegyric. They were not great men of that class, whose characters we must refrain from examining with too curious a scrutiny, if we would not destroy the sort of poetical illusion under which they have been regarded. They were men who might be followed to their retirements, and observed in their daily actions, and listened to in their secret and most confidential intercourse, and overheard in their soliloquies. Amid the stars which enlighten and cheer us in the darkness of political history, the pure brilliancy of the fame of Washington will appear, as the Cross of the South, in the southern hemisphere, is described by travellers,—a constellation, whose beauty and splendour at once fix the attention of him who is gazing on the heavens, and which is regarded with a sentiment of religious veneration. But he was associated with many men who were worthy to be his associates. We are speaking of the union of public and private virtues, and of that real moral greatness, which is always consistent with itself, and appears in the whole character. We would not make an invidious selection ; but we may be allowed to pay a passing tribute to the memory of an honourable man of our native state, General Lincoln. Men like him were associated with Washington ; and who was ever listened to in uttering an imputation against the thorough integrity of his character ? In a large proportion of the officers and even privates of our army, there was a real spirit of patriotism, and an ardent and intelligent love of liberty, of which very few armies, we believe, have given any example. Hard-

ly provided with food or clothing, without pay, almost without the common objects of a soldier's ambition, or hope of any personal reward, they continued firm in the cause in which they were engaged; feeling only that it was the cause of their country. The history of our revolution will not be a mere history of the follies and vices of princes, a history of battles and sieges, of the common game of blood, carried on by the movements of armies, such a history as children may read for amusement; and such as a thinking man will read with a deep feeling of the wasting miseries, and horrible crimes, which lie concealed under the superficial detail; it will be a history of intellectual prowess, of high efforts of virtue, and of willing and generous sacrifices. The troops engaged in the war were at no time numerous; and the result of its battles affords none of that sort of excitement, which arises from the statement of a large number of killed and wounded. But our revolution was a display of human nature in uncommon circumstances, and acting from higher principles than ordinary. It was a moral struggle, in which individual characters were exhibited, strongly operated upon, and brought into powerful action; and in which many particular men, in the cabinet and in the field, had an opportunity of signaling themselves by personal and distinctive actions. Its history, on this account, will have a peculiar interest. But its main interest will arise from the most important consequences of the event it records,—consequences which are still developing. We do not speak of any influence, it has sometimes been fancied to have had, in hastening the period of those terrible events which have subsequently been felt in every part of Europe. The ancient institutions of France fell, and buried thousands in their ruins, and spread desolation around, not through any shock received from our revolution, which resembles that of France in nothing but its name; not even because they were undermined by the most profligate, and the most desperate of men; but because the building was rotten in every part, and its foundations had been giving way for a century. It is in the history of that country, and not of ours, that the causes of its revolution are to be studied. We refer to consequences of a very different kind; to the establishment of a free commonwealth, such as had been before regarded, as a poetic vision, or the day-dream of a political enthusiast. To apply the nervous lan-

guage which Milton used, in looking forward to the bitter disappointment of his hopes with regard to his own country, we, unlike what he anticipated of that country, were a nation, valourous and courageous enough to win our liberty in the field; and when we had won it, we had heart and wisdom enough in our counsels, to know how to use it, value it, what to do with it, and with ourselves.* Our revolution has given an impulse, and an opportunity for their display, to all the more noble principles of human nature. The state of our country is a spectacle, the most encouraging and delightful to the well-wishers of mankind. Never before was such free scope afforded to the operation of those causes, to which we must look for improvement in the condition of our race. And they have commenced their operation. We are in advance of the rest of the civilized world. There is no question about it. In the full enjoyment of political and religious liberty, in our capacity to bear and to preserve this liberty, in our equal regard to the rights of every member of the community, in the general diffusion of knowledge, in our freedom from noxious and debasing prejudices, in the absence of all those many obstacles to happiness and virtue which man, by positive institutions, has thrown in the way of man,—in all these and in other respects, we are far in advance of the rest of the civilized world. We hold out an example to them of what may possibly be attained. The historian of our revolution may, if he please, take for his motto,

Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo.

Too much agency has sometimes been ascribed to Franklin, (abroad rather than at home,) in originating and directing the measures of this country during its opposition to Great Britain. He has been called, we believe, the father of our revolution. The mistake implied in such an expression is a very gross one, but easily accounted for. He was for a long period, first during his residence in England, and afterward while ambassador in France, the most distinguished American in Europe, and the most important representative of our country. He appeared to foreigners placed in a nearer and more conspicuous station than any other man; and

* 'That a nation should be so valourous and courageous to win their liberty in the field; and when they have won it, should be so heartless and unwise in their counsels as not to know' &c. *Milton's Ready and Easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth.*

his fame as a philosopher had already rendered him an object of general attention. When it was obvious at the same time, that he performed a very important part, the mistake was easy to suppose this, the most important; and to attribute to him a very disproportionate share of merit in securing the liberties of his country.

In July, 1785, in his eightieth year, Franklin left France, having resided there about eight years and a half. He received upon his departure 'every mark of respect, attention, and kindness.' He landed for a short time in England at Southampton, where he was met by several of his old friends, particularly the distinguished bishop of St. Asaph. Here an incident happened to him so singular, that it is worth giving in his own words from his journal.

'Monday, July 25—I went at noon to bathe in Martin's salt-water hot-bath, and floating on my back, fell asleep; and slept near an hour by my watch without sinking or turning; a thing I never did before, and should hardly have thought possible. Water is the easiest bed that can be. *Memoirs.* p. 375.

Upon his return to America, Franklin was received with strong expressions of respect. He was chosen a member of the Convention for forming the new constitution of the United States. His acquaintance with the science of government, we suppose, will not be regarded as having been very profound. He thought a senate not necessary, and that one chamber alone was preferable; and he proposed as a part of the constitution, that the members of the '*executive branch*' should serve without salaries. He was however, on the whole, a decided supporter of the new constitution, and wrote against its opposers. In a letter to M. Le Veillard, he says;

'It has met with great opposition in some states, for we are at present a nation of politicians. And though there is a general dread of giving too much *power* to our *governors*, I think we are more in danger from too little obedience in the *governed*.' *Mem.* p. 391.

He served for three years, from his eightieth to his eighty third, as president of the state of Pennsylvania. He was president likewise of two societies, established in Philadelphia, one for *alleviating the miseries of public prisons*; and the other for *promoting the abolition of slavery, the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage, and the improvement of the*

condition of the African race. In the latter society, Franklin appears to have been particularly interested. The *Address and Plan* published by it are supposed to have been drawn up by him. His last public act is said to have been the signing, as president of this society, of a memorial presented by it to the House of Representatives of the United States, on the 12th of February, 1789, praying them to exert their power for the abolition of the slave-trade. A few weeks before his death, he wrote an essay, which appeared in the *Federal Gazette* of March 25, 1790, signed *Historicus*,

‘in which he communicated a speech, said to have been delivered in the Divan of Algiers, in 1687, in opposition to the prayer of the petition of a sect called *Erika*, or purists, for the abolition of piracy and slavery. This pretended African speech was an excellent parody of one delivered by Mr. Jackson, of Georgia. All the arguments urged in favor of negro slavery, are applied with equal force to justify the plundering and enslaving of Europeans.’ *Memoirs*, p. 405.

It is indeed a most remarkable production for an old man, in his eighty fifth year; and who had now been for several months chiefly confined to his bed, suffering from a complication of the most painful disorders, the gout and the stone. Franklin was guilty of no dereliction of himself. He employed his powers to the last, and his powers continued vigorous.

We have now reached the closing scenes of his life.

‘In the beginning of April, 1790, he was attacked with a fever and complaint of his breast, which terminated his existence. The following account of his last illness was written by his friend and physician, Dr. Jones.

‘The stone, with which he had been afflicted for several years, had for the last twelve months confined him chiefly to his bed; and during the extremely painful paroxysms, he was obliged to take large doses of laudanum to mitigate his tortures—still, in the intervals of pain, he not only amused himself with reading and conversing cheerfully with his family, and a few friends who visited him, but was often employed in doing business of a public as well as private nature, with various persons who waited on him for that purpose; and in every instance displayed, not only that readiness and disposition of doing good, which was the distinguishing characteristic of his life, but the fullest and clearest possession of his uncommon mental abilities; and not unfrequently

indulged himself in those *jeux d'esprit* and entertaining anecdotes, which were the delight of all who heard him.

‘About sixteen days before his death, he was seized with a feverish indisposition, without any particular symptoms attending it, till the third or fourth day, when he complained of a pain in the left breast, which increased till it became extremely acute, attended with a cough and laborious breathing. During this state, when the severity of his pains sometimes drew forth a groan of complaint, he would observe—that he was afraid he did not bear them as he ought—acknowledged his grateful sense of the many blessings he had received from that Supreme Being, who had raised him from small and low beginnings to such high rank and consideration among men—and made no doubt but his present afflictions were kindly intended to wean him from a world, in which he was no longer fit to act the part assigned him. In this frame of body and mind he continued till five days before his death, when his pain and difficulty of breathing entirely left him, and his family were flattering themselves with the hopes of his recovery, when an imposthumation, which had formed itself in his lungs, suddenly burst, and discharged a great quantity of matter, which he continued to throw up while he had sufficient strength to do it, but, as that failed, the organs of respiration became gradually oppressed—a calm lethargic state succeeded—and, on the 17th of April 1790, about eleven o’clock at night, he quietly expired, closing a long and useful life of eighty-four years and three months.’ *Memoirs*, pp. 409, 410.

Among Dr. Franklin’s papers were found the following verses, written some years before his death, which his grandson has thought worth preserving for the benefit of posterity.

‘*B. F.’s Adieu.*

‘If Life’s compared to a Feast,
Near fourscore years I’ve been a guest;
I’ve been regaled with the best,
And feel quite satisfied.
’Tis time that I retire to rest:

Landlord, I thank ye! Friends, good night.

April 22, 1784.’

Memoirs, pp. 417.

The verses are poor enough, and their levity passes into profanity.—In one of the foreign reviews, Franklin has been celebrated for his religious character, and his sincere and habitual piety. He certainly was far from being destitute of religious principles or feelings. There is no evidence, how-

ever, that at any subsequent period, he recovered from the infidelity into which he fell early in life, so as to become a Christian. Indeed, as far as indirect and presumptive evidence will go, there is proof of the contrary in the volumes before us. The inference drawn from them is also confirmed by information from other sources. ‘It is much to be lamented,’ says Dr. Priestley, in his *Memoirs*, ‘that a man of Dr. Franklin’s general good character, and great influence, should have been an unbeliever in Christianity, and also have done so much as he did to make others unbelievers. To me, however, he acknowledged that he had not given so much attention as he ought to have done to the evidences of Christianity, and desired me to recommend to him a few treatises on the subject, such as I thought most deserving of his notice, but not of great length, promising to read them, and give me his sentiments on them. Accordingly, I recommended to him Hartley’s evidences of Christianity in his *Observations on Man*, and what I had then written on the subject in my *Institutes of natural and revealed religion*. But the American war breaking out soon after, I do not believe that he ever found himself sufficiently at leisure for the discussion.’

Franklin, however, was educated a Christian, in the midst of a religious community ; and the early and probably very deep impressions which he thus received, though they might be afterward obscured, were never effaced. Subsequently to that period in his life, when his opinions were in a very unsettled state, he never seems to have indulged himself in scepticism respecting the being and attributes of God, the immortality of man, or a future state of rewards and punishments. But it may be doubted, whether his belief in the two last mentioned truths, was not more the result of education, than of any inquiry into the evidence, by which they may be maintained without the support of revelation. Without this support, indeed, there is no sure and sufficient foundation for the structure of our religious belief. But he who has been educated a Christian, may, if he cease to be so, still retain the belief of truths, which he has been taught as derived from revelation, and still be influenced by sentiments dependent upon these truths. Though he reject the evidence by which they are established and justified, yet they may still survive in his mind ; as a plant will

continue to live, for a certain time, after being separated from its root. To Franklin's early education, is to be attributed, we think, that frequent recurrence of his mind to religious topics, which appears in his writings. He had, at the same time, a great deal too much practical good sense, and too much love of the useful, not to be very strongly sensible, at least in the latter part of his life, of the importance to society of religious belief. One of the letters contained in his correspondence is addressed to the author of a skeptical work, dissuading him from its publication on account of the pernicious effects it was adapted to produce. We do not, however, put any great value upon such a regard for religion, when it exists alone. He who is ready to acknowledge religion to be useful, may, if he please, find it to be true; and he has not that excuse for neglecting its evidence, which arises from any gross mistake respecting its character.

We do not recollect any thing of Franklin's writing, which is adapted to give a more favourable impression of his religious feelings, than the following letter, addressed to his niece, Miss Hubbard, on the death of his brother, Mr. John Franklin, her father in law. We quote it the more readily as it is a specimen of composition in the finest style of Seneca.

‘*Philadelphia, Feb. 23, 1756.*

‘We have lost a most dear and valuable relation (and friend).—But, it is the will of God that these mortal bodies be laid aside when the *soul* is to enter into *real life*. Existing here is scarce to be called life; it is rather an embryo-state, a preparative to living; and man is not completely born till he is dead. Why, then, should we grieve that a new child is born among the immortals, a new member added to their happy society?

‘We are *spirits*!—That bodies should be lent while they can afford us pleasure, assist us in acquiring knowledge, or doing good to our fellow-creatures, is a kind and benevolent act of God. When they become unfit for these purposes, and afford us pain instead of pleasure, instead of an aid become an incumbrance, and answer none of the intentions for which they were given, it is equally kind and benevolent that a way is provided, by which we may get rid of them.—*Death* is that way: we ourselves prudently choose a *partial death* in some cases. A mangled painful limb, which cannot be restored, we willingly cut off. He who plucks out a tooth, parts with it freely, since the pain goes with it; and he that quits the *whole body*, parts at once with all the

pains, and possibilities of pains and pleasures, it was liable to, or capable of making him suffer.

‘Our friend and we are invited abroad on a party of pleasure, *that is to last forever*. His chaise was first ready, and he is gone before us. We could not all conveniently start together; and why should you and I be grieved at this, since we are soon to follow, and *we know where to find him?*’ *Mem.* pp. 415, 416.

But religion when not identified with Christianity, and when, of consequence, it derives no support from revelation, holds but an insecure, and disputed authority in the mind. Of Franklin’s morals, there are not materials enough in the two quarto volumes before us, to enable us to form a full and fair judgment; and the information which we have derived from other sources is so general, or so indirect, that we cannot with propriety make it the ground of any public statement. Of some parts of his political conduct, we have already sufficiently expressed our opinion. He seems to have been regarded by many of his contemporaries, as having had too much of that simulation and dissimulation, which is taught by Lord Bacon.* The libertinism of his early life is related by him in his memoirs, without any expression of shame or repentance. Of his wife and children, there is but little account in the present volumes; and very little that may enable us to judge of his character in the domestic relations.

But whatever charges may be brought against him, it is to be recollected, that he was preeminently distinguished from ordinary men by his zeal and talents for being useful. There was nothing, it is true, of a very high character in his exertions or sacrifices, except the continuance and frequency of the former. It is a quite different kind of praise to which he is entitled, from that which is due to such men as Howard or Clarkson. He had, it may be remarked at the same time, little of the spirit of a reformer. He did not attempt to remove moral and physical evils, by entering into a difficult and dangerous conflict with the prejudices by which they are produced. But he very industriously made use of common means for the attainment of very beneficial purposes; and sedulously directed the attention of men to valuable objects, which might be secured without any struggle against pre-

* See his essay on *Simulation* and *Dissimulation*.

vailing errors. ‘I have always,’ he says, ‘set a greater value upon the character of a *doer of good*, than upon any other kind of reputation.’ He appears to have taken sincere pleasure in contemplating and promoting the well-being of his fellow men. In reading his correspondence, we were particularly struck with the following characteristic letter.

‘To Mr. Benjamin Webb.

Dear Sir,

Passy, April 22, 1784.

I received yours of the 15th instant, and the memorial it inclosed. The account they give of your situation grieves me. I send you herewith a bill for ten *Louis d’ors*. I do not pretend to *give* such a sum; I only *lend* it to you. When you shall return to your country with a good character, you cannot fail of getting into some business that will in time enable you to pay all your debts: in that case, when you meet with another honest man in similar distress, you must pay me by lending this sum to him; enjoining him to discharge the debt by a like operation when he shall be able, and shall meet with such another opportunity. I hope it may thus go through many hands before it meets with a knave that will stop its progress. This is a trick of mine for doing a deal of good with a little money. I am not rich enough to afford *much* in good works, and so am obliged to be cunning and make the most of a *little*. With best wishes for the success of your memorial, and your future prosperity, I am, dear Sir, your most obedient servant, B. F.’ *Correspondence*, p. 54.

We doubt whether ten *Louis d’ors* were ever before sent upon such an errand of benevolence; or presented in a manner less likely to oppress the receiver with a sense of obligation, or, we may add, more adapted to gain credit to the giver.

Dr. Franklin was distinguished by great practical good sense respecting the common affairs of the world; and by a freedom from extravagant and visionary calculations. But these excellencies were accompanied, though certainly not necessarily accompanied, by corresponding defects. There are some men, who see objects clearly as they are in themselves, and who observe likewise their nearest and most obvious relations; but who pay little regard to their relations to higher objects, to the invisible and the remote; men whose thoughts are never conversant in the world of the imagination, and busy with forms of ideal perfection. They regard man principally as a being of this life, with certain natural

wants and desires, and enjoying or suffering a certain quantity of good or evil, generally proportioned to his external circumstances ; but they think little of those capacities which in the greater part are but imperfectly developed, and scarcely conceive of him as ‘ infinite in reason, noble in faculties, and in apprehension like a God.’ They fix upon objects of pursuit, the value of which is recognised by all ; and in their endeavours to attain them, keep the open road which is trodden by the multitude. They are never led to venture into untried and hazardous paths, by the prospect of opening the way to some distant, unappreciated good. To them, that utility which is obvious to all, constitutes beauty. They are desirous to do good ; but they are equally or more desirous to have the reputation of doing good ; and therefore what they propose to effect, must be something, the advantage of which may be understood by the generality. But it is not more a matter of calculation, than the habit of their own minds, to put but little value upon improvements, which cannot be weighed or measured, and which make no show in a statistical table. The character of Franklin resembled, we conceive, in some of its traits, that which we have just been describing. His mind was defective in the higher class of conceptions and feelings. He was not a man to distinguish himself by bold efforts or thankless sacrifices.

Dr. Franklin’s high reputation as a man of literature and science is perfectly well established. As a man of science, he was not, indeed, as some of his eulogists seem to have thought, the rival of Newton ; but though he devoted but a small part of his life to scientific pursuits, he is entitled to a distinguished place among philosophers of the second class. As a fine writer, though he formed himself without the benefit of a literary education, or the society of literary men, he may be compared with Addison or Goldsmith. He is their equal in wit and humour, in nice observation, and in ease and *naïveté* of language ; and he possessed far more acuteness and force of mind than either. He had but little imagination as a writer ; though he occasionally discovers some play of fancy, both in the conception of a piece, and in particular expressions ; as when he speaks of ‘ fine promises being forgotten like the forms of last year’s clouds.’ We will not vouch however that the figure is not stolen, for he was not very conscientious about committing such petty larcenies.

In his style, we meet occasionally, though but rarely, with some trifling blemishes, which may be supposed to be occasioned by his want of early education. But it is always admirable for its precision and perspicuity. It is as transparent as the atmosphere; and his thoughts lie before us like objects seen in one of our finest and clearest days, when their very brightness and distinctness alone give us pleasure. Exclusive of his papers on Electricity, he treats in his other works of various subjects of natural philosophy, morals, politics, and political economy; and he shows a mind which might have enabled him to attain the highest reputation as an author upon almost any one of these subjects, if he had directed to it a greater share of attention. There are thoughts and discussions in some of his letters and papers, which an inferior writer would have manufactured into a volume, without adding any essential argument or illustration. Those of his writings, also, in which such a character is to be expected, have, generally speaking, a decidedly moral tendency; and are adapted to form correct habits of thinking and action. From this praise, however, we must except, as formerly mentioned, the first part of the memoirs of his own life; which however is a curious and valuable document in the study of human nature.

In speaking of the fame of Franklin, as a man of literature and science, we cannot help recollecting how few men of this class our country can boast of, as having distinguished themselves by their writings. We are looking forward, indeed, to better things; but there is much, very much, yet to be done, to accelerate the approach of what we hope for. A great nation without literature, or whose literature is bad, is like a great man, who cannot converse, or who converses idly. Strangers will form but a mean opinion of his merits. Literary men, and not an hereditary aristocracy, are the ‘*Corinthian capital of polished society.*’ But such men are wanted by us more for use than ornament. We want men formed among us, formed to love and value their country, formed under the influence of our institutions, our manners, and our religious and moral habits, whose writings may perpetuate, and give efficacy to those feelings and principles, from which our present blessings are derived, and without which they cannot subsist. We want men among us, who may counteract the libertinism, irreligion, and loose-

ness of principle, which appear in one class of European writers, and the bigotry to established prejudices, which is found in another. We owe too something to the world, as well as to ourselves. If we have really attained to a degree of political happiness, and intellectual freedom, without example, we are placed in a situation to become the instructors of other nations. We have lessons of more importance to communicate than to receive.—This subject of our literature is one, on which it is not irreverent to apply the language of scripture, and to say that we ought to be *instant in season, and out of season*. No man, at the present day, can give better proof of his patriotism, or serve his country more effectually, than by promoting its literature. There is no secret about the manner in which this is to be done. There is but one thing wanting—ENCOURAGEMENT.

It remains to say a few words concerning the manner in which the editor of these volumes has performed his office. There is not much to praise—or to censure. He has inserted a good deal of matter, some of which might better have been omitted, and the rest abridged. Where Dr. Franklin's accounts of his life failed him, he has supplied a narrative of his own; and he is but an indifferent writer. The transition to his style from Dr. Franklin's is rather abrupt and unpleasant. But he has acknowledged and lamented his deficiency in this respect; and there is, therefore, nothing more to be said about it. Of Dr. Franklin's conversational wit, for which he was so distinguished, the only record preserved by the editor, consists of seven anecdotes printed together at the end of the Memoirs. When we came to these, we were, at first glance, disposed to regret, that he had not spared some of his other labours, and emulated the fame of Boswell. But the matter is as well as it is; for the editor, we suspect, is no better a reporter of his grandfather's good sayings, than Mrs. Jenyns, according to Cumberland, was of those of her husband; who, though she always, as he tells us, 'prefaced her recitals of them with; *as Mr. Jenyns says,*' yet he adds, 'it was not always what Mr. Jenyns said, and never, I am apt to think, *as Mr. Jenyns said.*' In the volumes before us, a third 4to volume is announced, to consist of selections from the published and unpublished writings of Dr. Franklin. While concluding this review, we have learnt that the contents of the three English 4tos have just been printed in six

8vo volumes at Philadelphia. We are glad to have at last this American edition of Dr. Franklin's life and writings.

There is another collection of a similar kind which we wish to have made; and we do not know that we shall find a better opportunity for suggesting it. It is a collection of the writings of Washington. We wish to see a splendid American edition of these, as perfect as the arts can make it, published as a sort of monument to his memory. There are various likenesses of him, from which engraved portraits might be taken and inserted in such a work, together with portraits of other eminent men, with whom he was connected. It is enough to say of his writings, that they correspond to his character. They are plain, manly, energetic, and full of wisdom. His Official Letters are among the most interesting books that we have read, and afford information which can be derived from no other source. We are ignorant why the publication of them was suspended, or why it has not been resumed. If there are not objections, with which we are unacquainted, we think it most desirable that the remainder should be given to the world. Those which are yet unpublished might be included in such an edition as we have proposed; and if any publisher were to execute such an edition faithfully, as it ought to be executed, there can be little doubt that he would be amply repaid.

ART. XV.—*Laws of the sea with reference to maritime commerce during peace and war—from the German of Frederick J. Jacobsen, advocate, Altona, 1815. By William Frick, Counsellor at Law. Baltimore; E. J. Coale, 1818. pp. 636.*

THE ancients have left us but little on the subject of commercial law; and that little has lost much of its value in modern times. It may perhaps be supposed that a great deal has perished amidst the ruins of the dark ages; or has been swallowed up in the desolations of conquest, or the overwhelming obliterations of time. Much splendid declamation has been employed in describing the maritime glory of the Phœnicians, and the Cretans, and the Rhodians, and the Egyptians, and the Greeks, and the Carthaginians, and the Romans. Without question the Mediterranean was from ear-